



# **WESTERN CAUCUS NEWS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
JULY 28, 2005

CONTACT: Cody Stewart  
(202) 226-5793

## **Congress Increases PILT Funding, Slows Federal Land Acquisition**

**Washington, D.C.** – Today, Members of the Western Caucus reacted positively to the federal land policy trend that was continued in the 2006 Interior Appropriations bill. For the fifth year in a row, Congress has decreased funds allocated for federal land acquisition while increasing funding for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program.

Members of the Caucus expressed encouragement as the bill increased PILT funding to \$236 million, the highest level ever recorded, while cutting the federal land acquisition budget to \$114 million.

Congressman Chris Cannon (UT-03), Chairman of the Western Caucus, stated, "I'm pleased we were able to achieve a historic level of funding for PILT, but we will keep fighting for full funding so rural counties won't have to continue footing the bill for lands owned by the federal government. I'm also encouraged that many Members are realizing before we purchase additional federal lands, we should take care of those already under federal management."

The PILT program is administered through the Department of Interior and provides payments to counties to make up for property taxes they can't collect on federal lands that are located within their boundaries. PILT funds help counties across the country pay for essential services such as law enforcement, health care, education, firefighting, environmental compliance and search and rescue.

Congresswoman Barbara Cubin (WY-At large) said, "This money is crucial for county governments to maintain their roads and provide firefighting and law enforcement services. The federal government has a responsibility to help support local governments when county land is removed the local tax base. When Congress shortchanges the PILT program, rural counties are the ones who end up paying the piper."

"It's not the amount it should be, but ever since Republicans took control of Congress and the White House, the numbers have certainly been heading in the right direction. We will continue to fight to keep that trend going, until our Western counties get the reimbursement off these lands that they deserve. The future will be even better," said Congressman Rob Bishop (UT-01).

Congressman Jim Gibbons (NV-02) said, "While today's bill provides a historic increase in PILT funding, it still falls short of the amount our rural communities need and deserve. Unfortunately, enough money is never appropriated and rural counties in Nevada and across the Western United States end up shortchanged. Hopefully, we can build upon today's success. The federal government needs to fully fund PILT and pay for the land it already owns, before it buys any more public lands."

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Federal Land Acquisition Funding (\$ millions)</u>	<u>PILT Funding (\$ millions)</u>
FY'00	\$343	\$133
FY'01	\$453	\$199
FY'02	\$428	\$209
FY'03	\$313	\$218
FY'04	\$169	\$224
FY'05	\$166	\$228
FY'06	\$114	\$236

*The Western Caucus is comprised of members of Congress committed to protecting the interests and ideals of the West. More information on the Caucus can be found at: <http://www.house.gov/cannon/wc/index.htm>.*

###